

Thursday 16 March 2000

15. Combating organised crime

B5-0248, 0259, 0267, 0274 and 0284/2000

European Parliament resolution on the fight against organised crime linked to illegal trafficking

The European Parliament,

- having regard to Article 38 of the Treaty on European Union,
 - having regard to the conclusions of the General Affairs Council of 15 February 2000 on the Western Balkans,
 - having regard to the conclusions of the extraordinary European Council of 15 and 16 October 1999 in Tampere,
- A. whereas on 24 February 2000 two Guardia di Finanza officers were killed and two others were seriously wounded in Brindisi by a group of criminals who were ruthlessly intent on protecting their consignment of smuggled cigarettes,
- B. whereas this incident is not an isolated case, since other tragic clashes have taken place in the same region, with several victims among the police and civilians,
- C. emphasising the growing danger represented by these criminal organisations, which traffic not only in smuggled cigarettes but also in drugs and arms, and are involved in the illegal immigrant trade,
- D. pointing out the growing links between these criminal organisations and those operating in several countries in south-eastern Europe and Russia,
- E. pointing out that organisations of this kind use the Puglia area as a crossing-point to other areas of Italy and to other European Union Member States, both for the illegal sale of smuggled goods and for the management of the enormous sums obtained,
- F. whereas effective measures to combat organised crime of this kind require coordinated European Union action, which is also needed to prevent the serious loss of revenue caused by the above-mentioned criminal activities,
- G. whereas the damage done concerns both security and the economy, affecting both the citizens and finances of the Member States of the European Union, as in the case of damage to tourism, which is an important economic resource for Southern Italy,
- H. whereas the European Union participates actively, through the Special Coordinator it has appointed, in the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe; whereas the presence of organised crime of this kind may seriously jeopardise reconstruction work in the countries of former Yugoslavia and in the Balkans through unlawful influence over the implementation of numerous programmes financed by the international community, and may also put at risk the democratic reconstruction of the countries in the region and the consolidation of a strong civil society,
1. Expresses its deepest sympathy for the civilian victims and the police officers killed in the course of duty;
 2. Expresses its deep concern regarding the constantly increasing number of operations carried out by criminal organisations engaged in smuggling, drug and arms trafficking and the illegal immigrant trade, which operate on the basis of international connections, especially in south-eastern Europe;
 3. Calls on the Council, the Commission and the Special Coordinator for the Stability Pact to set in motion a special political and diplomatic initiative to draw up joint agreements on police and judicial cooperation between the European Union and the relevant countries, to give active support to the proposals needed to implement these and to report back on initiatives in this field as soon as possible;

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4. Calls for immediate action be taken in respect of the authorities of the countries in the region, particularly Montenegro which, despite progress made recently, remains one of the most active centres for smuggling and the criminal gangs behind it;
5. Considers that judicial cooperation and measures to combat organised crime taken by the authorities of the countries in the region should be an essential component of their relations with the EU;
6. Calls on the Commission to begin investigations to ascertain the financial implications for the Member States and the European Union of excise duty revenue lost through the extensive illegal trade in smuggled cigarettes;
7. Considers that the legal bodies and police forces of the countries concerned should be put in a position to implement measures to combat this type of crime more and more effectively;
8. Is convinced of the need to promote the economic and social development of communities as a way of tackling the causes underlying the increase in smuggling and for this purpose calls on the Commission, the Council and the Member States concerned to promote specific development projects in the areas hit by this phenomenon;
9. Calls on the Council and the Commission to ensure that they participate actively in the 'Conference on Development and Security in the Adriatic and Ionian area' on 19 and 20 May 2000, as an effective contribution within the framework of the Stability Pact, as stated in the conclusions of the Tampere extraordinary European Council;
10. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the governments of the Member States and the authorities of the countries of south-eastern Europe.

16. CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora)

B5-0243, 0249, 0260, 0269 and 0275/2000

European Parliament resolution on the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the eleventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties to CITES to be held from 10 to 20 April 2000 in Nairobi, Kenya,
- A. aware of the importance of a world-wide Convention for the regulation of trade in endangered species of wild fauna and flora in order to avoid over-exploitation,
 - B. whereas CITES is the largest wildlife conservation agreement in existence with 148 parties to the Convention, which seeks to stop or regulate international trade that would be damaging or ultimately cause the extinction of a species,
 - C. aware that the trade in endangered species is at the heart of the relationship between the conservation of biodiversity and sustainable development in a way that includes the needs of local populations,
 - D. whereas the over-exploitation of wild species, the destruction of habitats, and the illegal trade in wild fauna, animals and animal parts are the main causes of the impoverishment of the Earth's biodiversity,
 - E. whereas it has not yet been possible to achieve for all the species concerned the general objective of the Convention, namely to limit the international trade in specimens of endangered species of wild fauna and flora to level that is not detrimental for their survival,